

of the wrens that nested in the south front of his house at Boone, bespoke a nature keenly sensitive to the beauties and finest melodies of Nature."

Thus we have lost from our ranks a man whose long and unchecked life was made up of those finer instincts which peculiarly fitted him for a journalist, soldier, legislator, historian, and lover of birds.

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### RICHARD BOWDLER SHARPE.

BY J. A. ALLEN.

*With Portrait*<sup>1</sup> (Plate IX).

RICHARD BOWDLER SHARPE, an Honorary Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, died at his home in Chiswick, London, on Christmas Day, 1909, at the age of 62 years, after a brief illness from pneumonia.

Dr. Sharpe was born in London, November 22, 1847, the eldest son of Thomas Bowdler Sharpe, a well-known publisher in London, and grandson of the Rev. Lancelot Sharpe, rector of All Hallows Staining, London, and for many years headmaster of St. Saviour's Grammar School in Southark. At the age of six he was placed in the care of an aunt, who kept a preparatory school at Brighton, where he passed three years. At nine he was transferred to a grammar school in Peterborough, of which his cousin, the Rev. James Wallace, was master. Here he "gained a King's Scholarship, which not only guaranteed his education but carried with it a small amount of money." Later his cousin accepted the head mastership of a grammar school at Loughborough, and young Sharpe followed him to his new post where he continued to win the chief prizes of the school. At the age of sixteen, at the instance of his father, he went to London and took a clerkship in the establishment of W. H. Smith & Son, and two years later entered the employment of B. Quaritch, the eminent London publisher and bookseller. At the age of nineteen he was appointed librarian to the Zoölogical Society, which office he held for five years, when,

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced, with permission, from 'British Birds,' Vol. III, February, 1910.



Martin Fox

British Birds  
Vol. III Pl. 13.

*J. W. Bonaparte*

*Born Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> 1817. Died Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> 1909.*



in 1872, he accepted the post of Senior Assistant in the Department of Zoölogy at the British Museum, made vacant by the death of that eminent ornithologist, George Robert Gray, which position he held till his decease, having been promoted in November, 1895, to be Assistant-Keeper in charge of the Vertebrate section of the Zoölogical Department.

Sharpe early gave evidence of a strong love of natural history, especially of birds and insects, and his ornithological work had begun in earnest at the time he accepted his first clerkship in London, at which time, we are told,<sup>1</sup> "he was devoting every moment of his spare time to the study of birds, with the determination to earn his living as an ornithologist." His first published work was his 'Monograph of the Alcedinidæ, or Family of Kingfishers,' begun when he was seventeen years of age and finished when he was twenty-two, a quarto volume of nearly 400 pages, with 121 colored plates. On the completion of this great work he began in 1871, in coöperation with Mr. H. E. Dresser, 'A History of the Birds of Europe' (4to, with colored plates), but the following year he was obliged to abandon this undertaking, completed later so successfully by his colleague, to take up his official duties as head of the Ornithological Department of the British Museum.

Here his ability was so quickly appreciated that he was soon entrusted with the preparation of the first volume of the 'British Museum Catalogue of Birds,' published in 1874, which gigantic work (Svo, 27 vols., 1874-1898) employed the chief part of his time and energies, apart from the official routine of his curatorship, for a quarter of a century, to be followed immediately by his 'Handlist of the Genera and Species of Birds' (Svo, 5 vols., 1899-1909.)<sup>2</sup> Of the 'Catalogue' he prepared personally volumes I-IV, VI, VII, X, XII, XIII, XXIII, and XXIV, and parts of volumes XVII and

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<sup>1</sup> This notice is based on the biographical sketch of Dr. Sharpe published in 'British Birds' for February, 1910 (Vol. III, pages 273-288, with portrait), by Mr. C. E. Fagan, and on that of Mr. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant in the 'Bulletin' of the British Ornithologists' Club (Vol. XXV, Feb. 1910, pp. 43-49, also with portrait and a bibliography by Mr. C. Chubb, pp. 49-70), from which nearly all of the facts here given relating to his personal history are derived, chiefly from Mr. Fagan's paper, this notice having been written before Mr. Grant's was received.

<sup>2</sup> For recent reviews of the 'Handlist' by the present writer see this journal, Vol. XXVII, Jan. 1910, pp. 93-95, and 'Science,' N. S., Vol. XXXI, No. 790, pp. 265-267, February 18, 1910.

XXVI, comprising nearly one half of the 11,500 species contained in the entire work.

These two undertakings, the 'Catalogue' and the 'Hand-list,' published during the thirty-seven years of his official life as Curator of the British Museum Department of Birds, are only a part, although a considerable part, of his ornithological output during this long period; for he found time to complete the unfinished works of several of his ornithological colleagues, and to write a large number of special publications on birds which alone might be considered a remarkable series to be produced by a single author. The first include Gould's 'Birds of New Guinea,' of which two-thirds was published after Gould's death; also five parts of Gould's 'Monograph of the Trochilidæ,' to say nothing of Sharpe's contributions to some of Gould's other works. He also completed and edited Seebohm's 'Eggs of British Birds,' and his 'Monograph of the Turdidæ,' and after Osbert Salvin's death assisted Godman in the completion of the 'Aves' of the 'Biologia Centrali-Americana.'

His own separate works include a 'Monograph of the Birds of Paradise and Bower-birds' (folio, 1891-1898); a 'Monograph of the Hirundinidæ' (4to, 1885-1894, with C. W. Wyatt); a new edition of Layard's 'History of the Birds of South Africa' (8vo, 1875-1884); 'An Analytical Index to the Works of the late John Gould,' with a biographical memoir (4to, 1893); 'A Handbook to the Birds of Great Britain' (4 vols., 8vo, 1894-1897); 'A Review of Recent Attempts to Classify Birds' (1891); Part III of the 'Catalogue of the Osteological Specimens in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons (Aves, 8vo, 1891); 'History of the Bird Collection in the British Museum' (1906).

He also wrote the reports on the birds for the 'Zoölogy' of various Government and private Exploring Expeditions, as the Voyage of the 'Erebus' and 'Terror' (Birds, 4to, 1875); the Voyage of the 'Alert' (1884); the Second Yarkand Mission (1891); Oates's 'Matabele Land and Victoria Falls' (1881 and 1889); and Jameson's 'Story of the Rear Column of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition' (1890).

His ornithological papers in scientific journals, beginning in 1866, number nearly four hundred, and some of them are of con-

siderable length, while for fifteen years he was the recorder for the Class Aves in the 'Zoölogical Record,' beginning with the year 1870 and ending with 1908, with two considerable periods of intermission when the post was filled by others.

In addition to this long list of technical works and papers, he also found time to write various popular works on birds, as the bird volume of Cassell's 'New Natural History' (Aves, 1882), 'Birds in Nature' (4to, 1888), the bird volume of the 'Concise Knowledge Library' (Svo, 1897), 'Sketch-book of British Birds' (Svo, 1898), 'Wonders of the Bird World' (Svo, 1898), and a two-volume edition of Gilbert White's 'Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne' (1900), besides lesser contributions of a similar character.

His remarkable success in building up the National collection of birds, from 35,000 in 1872 to about 500,000 in 1909, despite the weeding out of many duplicates, is well known. Many of the important collections that were transferred to the British Museum by their donors were avowedly contributed to this institution in consequence of the presence of Dr. Sharpe at the head of the Ornithological Department, as notably the great Hume and Tweedale collections, and others. Many others were acquired by purchase through the influence of his enthusiastic and persistent appeals to the Trustees of the Museum.

His curatorial duties naturally absorbed a large amount of his time and limited his opportunities for research and literary work, so that, it is currently stated, a large part of the 'Hand-list' was written at his home after a day of toil at the Museum.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Sharpe's scientific interests were rather closely restricted to the class of birds, but here he was easily a master, and his influence upon the progress of ornithology during his lifetime would be hard to measure, and in certain ways was undeniably preëminent. In his knowledge of the external characters of birds, and his ability to remember and recognize species offhand, he was probably without a peer; but he was not a deep student of the anatomy

<sup>1</sup> Since the above was written the January, 1910, issue of 'The Emu' has been received, containing a letter from Dr. Sharpe to one of the editors, in which Dr. Sharpe says: "I seldom have a moment to myself, and have to do most of my work at home, and scarcely an evening that I do not work from 8 P. M. till 2 and 3 A. M. I have finished Vol. V of the 'Handlist' at last, thank God!"